

Simple, Easy to Understand ‘Mindfulness’

By

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In Buddhist meditation, have the questions ever come up, “What is mindfulness (Sati), really?”... “Exactly how does one practice being mindful?”... “Can mindfulness really lighten up one’s perspective and help bring joy, happiness and balance into every aspect of life?”

If mindfulness is recollecting how to proceed step-by-step when a distraction arises and pulls mind’s attention away from whatever one is doing during their daily activities or during their sitting meditation practice, then by doing this practice life becomes easier and more stress free, at that point it seems that it would be a useful tool to develop. Don’t you agree?

To clearly understand this connection, one first has to start with a precise definition of Meditation (Bhavana) and Mindfulness (Sati). Seeing this will help one gain a new harmonious perspective (Samma Ditthi) of exactly how mind works and teaches the meditator ‘HOW’ to change old painful habits that cause great suffering into a new way of having a contented, balanced mind. This is the point of all of the Buddha’s teachings, isn’t it?

Meditation (Bhavana) is “observing how mind’s attention moves moment-to-moment in order to see clearly and precisely ‘HOW’ the impersonal (anatta) process of Dependent Origination (Paticca Samupada) occurs.” Seeing and understanding ‘HOW’ mind’s attention moves from one thing to another is what the main thrust is in Buddhist Meditation! This is why Dependent Origination is so important to see and understand. It develops an impersonal perspective with all arising phenomena and leads the meditator to see for themselves the true nature of all existence.

Why is this important? Because concerning awakening, it has been said by the Blessed One: **“One who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent origination.”** [MN-28:28]

Mindfulness is “remembering HOW to observe mind’s attention as it moves moment-to-moment and remembering what to do with any arising phenomena!”

Successful meditation needs a highly developed skill of Mindfulness. The “6R’s” training taught at Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center is a reclaimed ancient guidance system which develops this skill. The first R is to RECOGNIZE but before we do it, the meditator must RECOLLECT or use their observation power [mindfulness] for the meditation cycle to start running. Mindfulness is the fuel. It’s just like gas for an engine. Without Mindfulness, everything stops! Being persistent with this practice will relieve suffering of all kinds. To begin this cycle “smoothly” one must start the engine and have lots of gas (mindfulness) in the tank!

Meditation (Bhavana) helps one let go of such difficult delusional states in life as fear, anger, tension, stress, anxiety, depression, sadness, sorrow, fatigue, condemnation, feelings of helplessness or whatever the catch (attachment) of the day happens to be. (Delusional here means taking things that arise personally and identifying with them to be “I”, “Me”, “Mine” or atta in Pali). These states are the suffering that we cause to ourselves. This suffering comes from a lack of understanding how things actually occur.

The “6R’s” are steps which evolve into one fluid motion becoming a new wholesome habitual tendency that relieves any dis-ease in mind and body. This cycle begins when MINDFULNESS recollects the “6R’s” which are:

RECOGNIZE

RELEASE

RELAX

RE-SMILE

RETURN

REPEAT

Development of mindfulness (one’s observation power) recollects each step of the practice cycle. Once one understands what the purpose of mindfulness is, keeping it going all the time is no longer problematic and makes the meditation easier to understand, plus it is much more fun to practice. It becomes a part of happy

living and this brings up a smile. Remembering and recollection leads to having a wholesome up-lifted mind.

This recollection (mindfulness) is very important. Before practicing the ‘6R’s’ one has to REMEMBER to start the cycle! That’s the trick! Remembering to gas-up the engine, so it can run smoothly! Then we begin to:

RECOGNIZE: Mindfulness recollects how the meditator can recognize and observe any movement of mind’s attention from one thing to another. This observation notices any movement of mind’s attention away from an object of meditation, such as the breath, sending out of Metta or, doing a task in daily life. One can notice a slight tightness or tension sensation as mind’s attention barely begins to move toward any arising phenomena. Pleasant or painful feeling can occur at any one of the six sense doors. Any sight, sound, odor, taste, touch, or thought can cause this pulling sensation to begin. With careful non-judgmental observation, the meditator will notice a slight tightening sensation. **RECOGNIZING** early movement is vital to successful meditation. One then continues on to;

RELEASE: When a feeling or thought arises, the meditator RELEASES it, let’s it be there without giving anymore attention to it. The content of the distraction is not important at all, but the mechanics of HOW it arose are important! Just let go of any tightness around it; let it be there without placing attention on it. Without attention, the tightness passes away. Mindfulness then reminds the meditator to;

RELAX: After releasing the feeling or sensation, and allowing it to be without trying to control it, there is a subtle, barely noticeable tension within mind/body. This is why a RELAX [TRANQUILIZATION] step is being pointed out by the Buddha in his meditation instructions. **PLEASE, DON’T SKIP THIS STEP!** It would be like not putting oil in a car so the motor can run smoothly. The important Pali word here is ‘pas’sambaya’. The word specifically means ‘to tranquilize’ and appears in the sutta as ‘an action to be performed’ and is not ‘a general kind of relaxed or tranquilized feeling’ that can arise with other kinds of meditations. This point is sometimes mis-understood in translation which then changes the end result! Without performing this step of relaxation every time in the cycle of meditation, the meditator will not experience a close-up view of the ceasing (cessation) of the tension caused by craving or feel that relief as the tightness is relaxed. Note that craving always first manifests as a tightness or tension in both one’s mind and body. One has a momentary opportunity to see and experience the true nature and relief of cessation (of tightness and suffering) while performing the RELEASE/RELAX steps. Mindfulness moves on with a recollection the meditator should then;

RE-SMILE: If you have listened to the Dhamma talks at www.dhammasukha.org you might remember hearing about how smiling is an important aspect for the meditation. Learning to smile with mind and raising slightly the corners of the mouth helps mind to be observant, alert and agile. Getting serious, tensing up or frowning causes mind to become heavy and one’s mindfulness becomes dull and slow. One’s insights become more difficult to see, thus slowing down one’s understanding of Dhamma. Imagine, for a moment, the young Bodhisatta resting under the Rose Apple Tree as a young boy. He was not serious and tense when he attained a pleasant abiding [jhana] and had deep insights with a light mind. Want to see clearly? It’s easy! Just lighten up, have fun exploring and smile! Smiling leads us to a happier more interesting practice. If the meditator forgets to Release/Relax, rather than punishing or criticizing oneself, be kind, re-smile and start again. Keeping up one’s humor, sense of fun exploration and recycling is important. After re-smiling, mindfulness recalls the next step.

RETURN or RE-DIRECT: Gently re-direct mind’s attention back to the object of meditation (that is the breath and relaxing, or metta and relaxing) continuing with a gentle collected mind to use that object as a “home base”. In daily life, having been pulled off task, this is where one returns their attention back to releasing, relaxing, and re-smiling into the task. Sometimes people say this practice cycle is simpler than expected! In history simple things can become a mystery through small changes and omissions! Reclaiming this practice develops more effective focus on daily tasks with less tension and tightness. Mind becomes more naturally balanced and happy. The meditator becomes more efficient at whatever they do in life and, actually, they have more fun doing all of the things that used to be a drudgery. Nearing the end of the cycle, Mindfulness helps with a final recollection to;

REPEAT: REPEAT this entire practice cycle to attain the results the Buddha said could be reached in this lifetime! Repeating the “6R’s cycle” over and over again eventually replaces old habitual suffering as we see and experience for ourselves what suffering actually is; notice the cause which is our involvement with the tension and tightness in any way; experience how to reach the cessation by releasing and relaxing; and discover how to exercise the direct path to that cessation of suffering that we cause ourselves. This happens each time one Releases an arising feeling, Relaxes and Re-smiles. Notice the Relief.

**Sharpening the skill of mindfulness is the key
to simple and smooth meditation.**

In summary, Mindfulness is very relevant to Buddhist meditation and daily life. The process of recollection keeps the 6 steps of the practice moving. Practicing this meditation as close to the description (found in the suttas) as possible will lighten all of life's experiences. A very similar practice was most likely taught to people in the time of the Buddha. The remarkable results of doing the meditation in this way are "immediately effective" for anyone who diligently and ardently embraces these instructions. When one has an attachment arise this practice will eventually dissolve the hindrance, but it does take persistent and constant use of the "6R's" to have this happen.

When one practices in this way, because it is found to be so relevant in daily life, it changes one's perspective and leads us to a more successful, happy, and peaceful experience. Developing mindfulness, knowledge and wisdom grow naturally as one sees HOW things work by witnessing the impersonal process of dependent origination. This leads to a form of happiness the Buddha called "Contentment". Contentment is the by-product of living the Buddhist practice. This meditation leads to equanimity, balance and dissolution of fear and other dis-eases. With less fear and dread one finds new confidence. Then Loving Kindness, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity grow in our lives.

The practitioner's degree of success is directly proportional to how well they understand mindfulness, follow the precise instructions, and use the "6R" practice in both the sitting practice and in one's daily life. This is the way to the end of suffering. It's interesting and fun to practice this way and certainly it helps one smile while changing the world around them in a positive way.

May you reach Nibbana quickly and easily in this very life time!